



Department of Justice

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Eastern District of California

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Friday, August 22, 2008
www.usdoj.gov/usao/cae
Docket #: 06-cr-66-LJO

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FRESNO MAN SENTENCED TO 30 YEARS IN PRISON
FOR PRODUCING AND DISTRIBUTING CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

FRESNO, Calif.—United States Attorney McGregor W. Scott announced today that RAYMOND WILLIAM RONELL JR., 44, of Fresno, Calif., was sentenced late yesterday afternoon by District Judge Lawrence J. O'Neill to 30 years in prison, followed by a life term of supervised release, for producing and distributing child pornography.

This case is the product of an investigation by the Fresno Police Department, the Fresno County Sheriff's Department Computer Crimes Unit, and the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Trial Attorneys James Silver and Barak Cohen of the Criminal Division's Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section (CEOS) assisted at sentencing.

According to Assistant United States Attorney David Gappa, who prosecuted the case, RONELL pleaded guilty to the crimes on Sept. 24, 2007 and has been in custody since his arrest on Nov. 25, 2005. The charges against RONELL emerged from a child abduction investigation begun by the Fresno Police Department on Nov. 25, 2005 when they were alerted to the disappearance of a 12-year-old Fresno girl. The minor was returned to her home later that day and RONELL became a suspect in her disappearance. Court records reveal that as part of their investigation into her disappearance, detectives seized a digital camera from RONELL's car, and were later able to recover previously deleted, sexually explicit images of the minor that RONELL produced and stored on a memory card. A search warrant executed at RONELL's

residence led to the seizure of five computer hard drives and various electronic storage devices containing digital images. Subsequent forensic review of that material revealed several thousand still and video files of child pornography, including images of infants being sexually abused by adult males.

“Protecting our children from individuals like this defendant who prey upon and sexually exploit children is a top priority for ICE,” said Mark Wollman, special agent in charge for the ICE office that oversees the agency’s investigations in Sacramento. “Sexual predators should know that ICE will do everything in its power and use every tool at its disposal to keep our children safe—whether the potential victims are around the block or around the world.”

U.S. Attorney Scott stated, “The lengthy sentence imposed by the court removes a child predator from our community. The protection of children will continue to be a top priority for this office and the Department of Justice.”

Information contained in filed sentencing documents characterized RONELL’s collection of child pornography as one of the most extensive and extreme that has ever been encountered by law enforcement. After reviewing only a small number of child pornography images at sentencing, the judge commented that the material made him nauseous, and that children had been tortured because people like the defendant created a demand for child pornography.

The documents further reflect that an analysis of parts of the collection led to the identification of a minor victim who had been taken into protective custody in Indiana, as well as the arrest of a suspect in Iowa who later confessed to victimizing 23 minors, including six who were actively being molested at the time of the suspect’s arrest in May 2006.

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